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ON ANCIENT IRISH BELLS.

BY T. L. COOKE, ESQ.

WITH this paper were sent to the May meeting of the Kilkenny Archæological Society, for inspection of the members, the remains of seven bells of Irish Christian saints; also, some spherical and pear-shaped crotals of Pagan times, some sheep bells of the sixteenth century, and some others. As some account of these bells may prove acceptable, I request the forbearance of the learned while I proceed, in the first instance, with a detail of whatever particulars have come within my reach respecting the BELL OF ST. MOLUA, of Clonfert-Molua, *alias* Kyle, in the Queen's County. This bell, if we deem it to be really of the same era with the saint whose name it bears (and there does not appear to be any reason for doubting that it is so), has now existed 1245 years—a long space of time indeed. Nothing but the most profound spirit of veneration, heightened by a feeling of religious awe, could have preserved this remnant of an intrinsically valueless piece of metal for such a length of time in a land such as Ireland has been, where the feuds of its children vied with foreign influences in accomplishing the prostration of the country.

This venerable remain is composed of iron; and, like many other ancient bells, is in shape, at the base, a parallelogram.¹ Its sides were rivetted together, and the joinings were also brazed, so as by a better union of its parts to increase the capability for sonorousness. The circumstance of this and many other ancient bells having been brazed, shows how early the practice of brazing iron was in use in Ireland. The portion still remaining of this antique probably does not exceed two-thirds of the original height. It now measures seven and a-half inches from top to bottom. It is six and four-tenth inches long by four inches broad at the mouth. The front and sides remain to the present time studded over with bronze nails, which evidently were inserted for the purpose of fastening to the bell plates of bronze or of some more valuable material. Those plates were, doubtless, highly ornamented and inlaid with crystals and variously coloured stones.

The saint, whom tradition names as having been the owner of this bell, was the celebrated Lua, known also as Molua—a term of endearment, and compounded of the Irish word *mo*, *my*, and *Lua*, a proper name. He is also known under the appellations Lugeus, Lugidus, and Luanus. Both Ware and Ussher write of Molua and Lugidus as of one and the same person. He is called Lugidus in the Paschal Epistle of Cuimin-fada, which reckons him one of the fathers of the Irish church. The bell of St. Cuimin-fada is amongst the collection now sent for exhibition, and a more full notice of it will be found in the sequel of these pages.

¹ As a solid it resembles a prismoid.

St. Molua's parentage is given by Fleming, thus:—"Fuit vir vitæ venerabilis de provinciâ Momoniæ, de regione Hua-Fidhgenti, de plebe Corcoiche, nomine Molua, cujus pater vocabatur Carthach, sed vulgo *Coche* dicitur; mater vero ejus Sochla, id est, *larga*,¹ vocabatur; quæ erat de occidentali Lageniensium plaga, id est, Osrâigi, oriunda." Ware, in his "*Writers of Ireland*" (as quoted by Lanigan, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, vol. ii. p. 207, n. 85), says of St. Molua—"Beatissimus abbas Ligidus, generosis ortus parentibus, patrem habuit Cartharium, genere Mumeniensem; mater autem dicta est Sochla natione Osrigenis." Dr. Lanigan, in his "*Ecclesiastical History*," informs us that he had not met with any account of the time of St. Molua's birth. Ussher (p. 919) mentions that he was a disciple of Comgall of Bangor, under whom it is believed he embraced the monastic state. After sojourning some time in the present county of Limerick the saint repaired to Sliabh-Bladhma,² and founded a monastery on the east side of that mountain at a place since known as Clonfert-Molua. This place was situated in the ancient district of Ossory, the principality of Mac-Gilla-Patrick, and near to the boundary between Ossory and ancient Munster, where Ely-O'Carroll meets the modern Queen's County. Dr. Lanigan erroneously places Clonfert-Molua in the King's County, but the Ogygia correctly has it in the Queen's County. This error of Dr. Lanigan may have arisen from his confounding Clonfert-Molua with Lettir-Lua, another house founded by the same saint, and situate in the King's County on the northern side of the Sliabh-Bloom range of mountains. Clonfert-Molua is also denominated Kyle, which seems to have been a more ancient name of this place. The family of which St. Molua's mother was a member was located in this neighbourhood.

Molua is said to have founded many religious houses besides that at Kyle. Some writers report that he established no fewer than one hundred. Thus, St. Bernard (*Life of St. Malachy*, c. 5) writes—"Locus vere sanctus fœcundusque sanctorum, copiosissime fructificans Deo; ita ut unus ex filiis sanctæ illius congregationis, nomine Luanus, centum solus monasteriorum fundator rectissime fertur." St. Molua compiled, for the government of the religious over whom he presided, certain rules, amongst which was one for the exclusion of all women from his monastery at Kyle—namely, "ut nulla mulier ibi semper intraret." He died early in the seventh century, and is commemorated on the 4th of August. The Four Masters fix A.D. 605 for the year of his decease, and the same date is adopted by Colgan in the *Acta Sanctorum*. Ware (*Writers*, b. i. c. 13) places his death in A.D. 609, while Butler (*Lives of the Saints*, vol. vi. p. 53) says "he passed to immortal glory on the 4th of August, 622."

¹ Sochla, instead of being equivalent to *larga* seems to mean *sensible*. It appears more likely to be derived from the word *roclað*, sensible. The lady probably was

gifted with much good sense. *Sóclu* signifies fame, renown, reputation.

² Supposed to be from *blacé*, a flower—*blacmac*, blooming.

The bell of St. Molua was presented to me by the Rev. John Egan, now parish priest of Dunkerrin in the King's County. It has been known by the appellation "ἡ σὺν Μολυα," that is, *relic or bell of Molua*. From very early times it was handed down in the family of which Mr. Egan's mother was a member. This lady was descended from the Duigans, once proprietors of the castle of Clonecouse and the lands surrounding it, in the parish of Kyle and Queen's County. I glean, in substance, the following particulars from a letter addressed to me in June, 1851, by the Rev. gentleman to whose kindness I am indebted for the possession of this antique instrument of sound.

According to the tradition of the Duigan family, this bell is not supposed to be itself the reliquary of St. Molua, but it sustained the reliquary, which was formed of plates of gold and silver, richly ornamented with precious stones and inlaid with a blueish-coloured metal-like substance. If we suppose the bell itself to be the relic, and its ornamented covering to have been the reliquary, the description just given of the latter is quite consistent with what we know of other bells of saints. These, having in course of time become useless for the production of sound, and having been succeeded by bells better in construction and composed of a more sonorous metal, were incased in richly adorned metallic coverings, and were afterwards carefully preserved in honour of the memory of the venerated saint to whom they respectively once belonged. Such was the fate of the Barnan Coulawn, or bell of St. Culanus of Glenkeen, in the county of Tipperary. He was brother of Cormac Mac Cullenan,¹ the well-known king and bishop of Cashel. The Barnan Coulawn is amongst the bells sent with this paper. It belongs to my collection, having come into my possession about forty years ago.² There are yet remaining, fastened to it with rivets, various bronze ornaments, curiously and artistically inlaid with gold, silver, copper, coloured stones, and a blueish metal-like substance,³ such as that said to have been used in the reliquary of St. Molua. The bronze rivets, still projecting from the surface of this last mentioned bell, strongly bear testimony to the accuracy of the tradition, which says that some other ornaments once adorned it.

The manner in which the Rev. Mr. Egan accounts for the loss of the ornamental covering of St. Molua's bell is thus:—He says, the same family tradition reports the Duigans, who were keepers of this relic, to have once been the owners of the castle of Clonecouse, near

¹ Cormac Mac Cullenan was long, but incorrectly, reputed to have been the founder of Cormac's chapel, on the Rock of Cashel. However, in a paper of mine, published in the 24th number of the Irish Penny Magazine, the 15th of June, 1833, under the signature B, I proved it to be the work of Cormac Mac Carthy; and, in

the words of that learned antiquary, John D'Alton, Esq. (34th No. of same Magazine), "wholly refuted" the pre-existing opinion.

² The Rev. Michael Bohun, P. P. of Glenkeen, who presented the Barnan Coulawn to me, died on Christmas day, 1815.

³ Probably niello, which is a composition of silver, copper, and sulphur.

the church of Kyle. This castle passed into their family by intermarriage with a member of the house of Fitzpatrick of Ossory. Mr. Egan adds, that Clonecouse was subsequently granted to Sir Charles Coote, whose conduct during the revolutionary war has given a remarkable notoriety to his name on the pages of Irish history. My reverend friend has further informed me of a tradition, that, while the bell of St. Molua was deposited at Clonecouse, some marauding freebooters attacked that castle. They carried off the bell, with a vast quantity of other plunder. In their retreat it became necessary for them to cross a river not very far distant from the castle; but strange to say, as the legend relates, neither man nor horse could pass it! After remaining some time, as if spell-bound, on the river's banks, it occurred to the marauders that their retreat was supernaturally arrested by the mystic virtue of the bell they were about to carry away. That idea no sooner struck them, than they threw the bell into the river, and they then immediately effected a passage without further interruption or difficulty. After the lapse of many years the relic was recovered from the watery bed, in which it had lain concealed, by some labourers in the employment of a Mr. Walpole, who then kept Coolraine mills in the Queen's County. That gentleman with becoming propriety soon placed it in the custody of the descendant of its pristine guardians, the Duigans of Clonecouse castle.

Let me here examine how far the foregoing family tradition accords with written records, of the existence of which the Rev. Mr. Egan is, I believe, wholly unconscious. I find by an inquisition *post-mortem*, taken at Maryborough, the 24th of September, 1631, that Philip Duigan died the 24th of December, 1629, seized in fee of the lands of Ballyduffe, Kilclonecouse and Rahyn, containing four messuages, 630 acres of arable and pasture land, and 1340 acres of wood and moor; and that he left a widow, whose name was Ellice, and a son and heir, John, then 24 years of age and married. Kilclonecouse seems to have been the name of the lands on which the ruins of the monastery and also those of the castle stand. In fact the site of the monastery is between Clonecouse castle and Ballyduffe, another of the denominations mentioned in the inquisition I have referred to. How or when the Duigan family was divested of the lands specified in the foregoing inquisition I have not found recorded: but it is probable the head of that race was, in common with many of his countrymen, slain during the war of 1641, and the usual laconic entry—"in rebellion' interfect"—placed opposite his name. However this may be, we at all events find his broad lands in the Queen's County, to the extent of 1970 acres, granted by the crown, the 26th of October, in the 18th year of the reign of king Charles the Second, to Charles Coote, earl of Mountrath, at an annual quit rent of only £31 13s. 8½d., afterwards reduced to £20 13s. 2d. So far the tradition of the Duigan family, as communicated by the Rev. Mr. Egan, is corroborated by historical proof. It is very likely that

the asportators of Molua's bell from Clonecouse castle were some of Sir Charles Coote's celebrated cavalry—the same, by whose daring and intrepidity that active officer relieved Birr castle and several other forts in the Parliamentary interest in those days. This supposition assumes the appearance of greater probability from the circumstance of the bell having, in after times, been found in the waters supplying Coolraine mills, situate on the old mountain road, which formerly led from Clonecouse to Mountrath, the then usual head quarters and rendezvous of Sir Charles' followers. Leaving the miraculous detention of the freebooters on the river's banks, and the supernatural influence said to have been exercised by the bell, to be discussed by those who delight in legendary lore, I may here observe that, if the weight of plunder caused any inconvenience to the Cromwellian troopers on their march, the bell of an Irish saint was not an object for preservation by them; but, on the contrary, it would be the very first portion of the booty to be consigned to the stream. The bell of St. Molua is not the only relic of the kind which has been the subject of asportation in former times. Accordingly, the Four Masters, at the year 1261, relate that Donal O'Hara plundered the sons of Bermingham, in revenge for the killing of Cathal O'Hara and violation of the church of St. Fechin, at Ballysadare, in the county of Sligo; and the annalists add, that he slew Sefin, son of Bermingham, *the weapon with which he killed him being the bell which Bermingham had carried away from the church of Ballysadare!* This, truly, was a murderous and sacrilegious use to be made of the relic of St. Fechin!!!

The Rev. Mr. Egan states that the bell of St. Molua had been stripped of its ornaments before it reached the hands of his grandmother, from whom it descended to him. He impressively adds, "from her I had it—from me you have it."

This bell, like many others of the same kind, was used for the purpose of adjuration. On this subject the Rev. Mr. Egan writes—"I need hardly inform you that down to times almost within my own recollection, it was customary with the people, especially of Kyle, to swear on or before it (the bell). The manner of swearing was, as I have heard, to place the right hand on the reliquary, and to call God and St. Molua to witness the truth of whatever was asserted. The false swearer of such an oath would, according to popular belief, be immediately, visibly, and terribly punished; and cases have been cited in proof of this belief."

The use of bells, in the administration of oaths, is almost as ancient as Christianity in Ireland. They were, with that view, consigned to the custody of particular families and persons. This practice made it not uncommon to designate an individual by the title, "keeper of an adjuration bell." Accordingly, the Four Masters, *ad ann.* 1356, write, "Solomon O'Meallan, keeper of an adjuration bell, died. He was the most illustrious of the clergy of Ireland." Bells used for

adjuration were generally carried about in leathern cases called "minister," that is, *meiristiu*, from *motha airtiu*, travelling relics (see Dr. Petrie on the *Round Towers*, pp. 331 to 334). *Moio* and *motha* are Irish for a relic. Camden (*Britannia*, p. 788), following Cambrensis, has, in his account of the Irish, the following observation regarding their modes of swearing on bells and other relics of saints:—"Secundo, ut adhibeat sibi testem sanctum aliquem, cujus baculum recurvum, vel campanam tangat et osculetur." Nor was this mode of testifying to the truth unknown to Pagans. Thus, Pliny, lib. xix. c. 6, informs us, that, "allium, porrum, cepasque inter Deos iurando habuit Ægyptus."

If Christians swore by the bells and crosiers of saints, and the Egyptian by his onion, in like manner we find that the Jews swore by the temple, the altar, &c. Accordingly, we read in the learned work entitled, *Moses et Aaron*, p. 926, "Judei autem præprimis jurabant per Hierosolymam, per templum, per templi aurum, per altare, et donum super altari." It is worthy of observation how great an analogy is thus to be found between many of the religious rites and ceremonials used by Pagans, Jews, and Christians in former times.

It is proper to notice here, that Kilclonccouse, the modern name of the place where St. Molua erected the religious establishment known as Clonfert-Molua, has the first syllable (Kil) pronounced short, while Kyle, by which monosyllable the site of the monastery, as well the parish surrounding it, are also designated, is long, as the word is at present spoken by the inhabitants of that neighbourhood. *Cuyl* properly signifies a *couch, closet, or cell*; and hence it is used to express a *grave*. It appears to me that the site of the monastery of Clonfert-Molua was used as a place for worship and for burial before St. Molua established his house there, for we find within its precincts, as well as close to and outside of them, some ancient remains which bear strong marks of Paganism. Prominent amongst such is what is now known as *the grave of St. Molua*. It is near the south-western corner of the enclosure which surrounds the ruins of the church. In writing of it I shall call it simply, the *grave* (*cuyl*).

I do not believe that St. Molua was ever interred in it. We know that this saint came to Kyle from the neighbourhood of Sliabh-Luachra, in the county of Limerick; and we also know that he afterwards left Kyle and returned to the former place, where he erected several other religious establishments in the ancient district of Hy-Finginte, a territory which extended over the barony of Iraghticonnor, in the county of Kerry, and that of Conillo in the county of Limerick. I have not met with any account of where St. Molua died, or of where he was interred. The *grave* at Clonfert-Molua speaks plainly that it never contained his bones. Had the saint been interred at Kyle, *alias* Clonfert-Molua, it is far more probable that his resting-place would be found within the church of his own foundation, and near to,

or beneath, the principal or only altar thereof, than in the open ground outside. But, wherever he might have been interred, his corpse would, at all events, have been placed lying east and west, with his feet towards the congregation, according to the manner of sepulture of Christians and of clergymen.

Let us now inquire what is really the appearance of the *grave* in question? It is most remarkable, being twelve feet in length by three feet in breadth. A large, rude, and uninscribed stone marks one end; and a nearly similar stone points out the other end. The limits of the sides are defined by rough lime-stone flags standing on an end. The upper edges of these flags are barely visible above the surface of the ground. From what I have already written it seems evident that the *grave* resembles a Pagan cist more closely than it does the place of repose of a Christian father of the church. That it really is a Pagan remain is indisputably proved by the fact of its bearing north and south, and at right angles with every acknowledged Christian grave at Kyle, all of which lie east and west. While I reckon the *grave* to be a Pagan monument, I am in no-wise surprised to find the simple and credulous peasantry of the district believe that an object so remarkable must be the burial-place of their revered and celebrated patron saint.¹ But the Pagan aspect of this place does not end with what I have already written respecting it. About one hundred yards south-west of the *grave* is a large rock in its rough and natural state. Its upper surface contains two hemispherical or bowl-shaped cavities, each of which is somewhat more than a foot in diameter. This is called *clóc Mhólua*, i. e. Molua's stone. In my opinion it was either an emblem of God, or an altar, and served for the purpose of religious worship in Pagan times. It closely resembles several rocks undoubtedly used in Pagan rites in various parts of the country. One of these is in the King's County, and still bears the name of *Án moíra*, the

¹ We are informed by Mr. Hitchcock that he has seen several similar graves in the enclosures belonging to the small primitive churches in the west of the county of Kerry, and even in enclosures where no remains of a church are now to be found. Two, in particular, he mentions, as much resembling the grave above described by Mr. Cooke. One is situated at the west or door end of Temple-Managhan—a ruined, but beautiful oratory, about three miles to the north-west of Dingle—and is fourteen feet long, four feet broad, and three feet high. At the west end of this grave stands a fine pillar-stone bearing a long Ogham inscription, an engraving of which may be seen in Dr. Petrie's work on the *Round Towers*, p. 135. This is said to be St. Managhan's grave; but it is doubtful if the saint ever had such a pile of earth and stones raised over him. The reading of

the Ogham inscription would probably decide this question. There are several smaller and more unpretending graves in the same enclosure, and the whole of them seem to be of remote antiquity. The other grave alluded to is situated further to the west, in the townland of Vicarstown (of course, a modern name), and looks, indeed, very like a Pagan monument. It measures ten feet long, six feet broad, and about two feet high; it is covered with flags laid cross-wise, and has a stone standing at each end, the largest, or that at which Mr. Hitchcock takes to be the head of the grave, exhibiting some strange markings, possibly the remains of a cross, and several smaller ones, within a circle. There are no vestiges of any ancient building in the immediate vicinity of this grave; but several undoubted remains of Paganism are to be seen in the neighbourhood.—Eds.

great Ana. This deity was the earth, the Pagan Irish magna Mater, or Mater deorum. *Ἀν* also signifies a ring or circle, or cup, a bowl or round vessel. The hemispherical hollows in the rock at Kyle were, therefore, probably emblems of Ana. Until about sixty years ago a meeting used to be annually held at this so-called stone of St. Molua. This meeting was celebrated for dancing, merriment, and match-making. It was distinguished from the day dedicated to St. Molua by its having been held on the *first* of August, the day of the *Luž-nara*, or *Βῆαρκαμῆαε* (tournament), instituted by Louis, called *laim-rada*, or long-handed. The anniversary of St. Molua was the *fourth* of August.

There is a townland called Kylebeg, near the village of Aglish-cloghan, in the barony of Lower Ormond, county of Tipperary. At this place is an enclosure containing about an acre and a-half, or two acres, in the centre of which is a stone with two bowl-shaped cavities, and another stone which is convex and in the form of a half globe. It is to be remarked that these stones are of a coarse-grained granite, while the country for miles around Kylebeg presents no other rock than lime-stone. These stones must therefore have been brought thither a long distance. Innumerable human bones are found within the enclosure, which seems to have been once resorted to for religious worship and for sepulture. That it was originally Pagan is proved by the circumstance that the people of the country round, are, to the present day, in the habit of interring there those children which die without baptism, and whose corpses are, therefore, thought fit companions for those of Pagans only. Around the stones described as being at Kylebeg there are several white-thorn bushes. There is in my small collection of Irish antiquities, a small bronze pin with a pendent ornament in the shape of a crescent or new moon. It was found at Kylebeg. About a hundred yards from the Kylebeg enclosure, and in the same townland, is a spring well rudely environed with a wall, one side of which is shaped like an altar: it has upon it a lime-stone slab bearing the following inscription—"This is erected at this well in memory of St. Passawn, being a place of pilgrimage. Dtd. e Febry. 9r. 1772." It is said that a person named Simon Grady caused the inscription just copied to be set up, and that hence the fountain is called "Simon's well." I am not aware that there was any Christian saint named Passawn. The peasantry pronounce the word *Pishsawn*. Now *πίψ*, in Irish, signifies mystery or sorcery; *πίρ*, a tree, a trunk of a tree; and *πίορ* a cup; while *Ἀν* signifies both water and the Irish Mater deorum. Passawn, therefore, may mean either mystery at the well, tree at the well, cup at the well, or Ana's mysteries. There is a very large and now dead white-thorn standing over this well. The pilgrimage to which the inscription refers, was some sort of religious performance, which was partly gone through at the granite stones within the before-described enclosure or burial-ground, and partly at Simon's well. I have not learned on what day

such religious rounds used to take place ; but I think there can be little, if any, doubt, that they had their origin antecedent to Christianity. The identity of names, i. e. Kyle and Kylebeg, furnishes some additional reason for believing that Kyle, or Clonfert-Molua, was originally a Pagan fane, when we can scarcely doubt that Kylebeg was one. It may be added, that no remains of a Christian church exist at Kylebeg.

At the eastern boundary of the church-yard at Clonfert-Molua there is a curious stone vessel, now called "the trough of St. Molua." This last mentioned appellation seems to have originated in popular credulity and mistake similar to those which connected St. Molua's name with the *grave*. The trough probably was a Pagan sepulchral chest used for containing bones or ashes, the remains of cremation, or possibly both. It is too small to have contained the body of an adult. It is made of sand-stone, and measures on the interior three feet in length, by fourteen inches in width, and as many in depth. It is somewhat narrower at one end than at the other, and it is wider at bottom than at top. A groove or cell runs around its inside at the top, and seems to have served for the reception of a lid or cover.¹ At the eastern end of the trough is a thorn bush, amply decorated with many coloured rags. This thorn bush and its parti-coloured drapery is another mark inseparable from the memory of religious rites practised anterior to the introduction of Christianity into Ireland.

With regard to the names by which Clonfert-Molua has been, or yet is, known, I have already shown that Kyle meant a burial-place in connexion with the ceremonies of religion. Clonfert is an appellation bestowed on several places in Ireland. These were distinguished from one another by additional epithets. The two most remarkable places denominated Clonfert, are Clonfert-Brendan in the county of Galway, and Clonfert-Molua, the subject of these lines. It is very probable indeed that the last named place was called Clonfert when St. Molua first went there. From the saint's connexion with this locality it has been described as "*latibulum mirabile Sancti Moluæ*." It is generally admitted that the early ministers of Christianity in Ireland, selected as sites for their religious establishments such places as they found previously venerated for having been dedicated to the worship of Baal, of Ana, or of some other Pagan deity. Indeed, the well-known fact that the ruins of Christian churches are so frequently accompanied by round towers, pillar-stones, hole-stones, and cromleacs, ought to convince the most sceptical that some such motive must have caused the otherwise not to be accounted for companionship. The name Clonfert is, I believe, compounded of *cluar*, a remote situation, or *clón*, a pillar, and *feart*, a grave. I have already shown that *cúl*, from which is derived Kyle (another name

¹ May not this "trough" have been the rude baptismal font of the early church of St. Molua? We have seen many such in

church-yards, where there are no indications of Pagan remains. The sunken groove for the cover is common in fonts.—Eds.

of Clonfert-Molua), also signifies a grave. The most ancient denomination by which Clonfert-Molua was known is Ross-Bulead, which also has reference to a depository for the dead, as well as to the culture of religion. Ror signifies a plain, a promontory; so rōr is a grove, science, knowledge; and ulaδ means a charnel-house, a monument, while ulla is either a burial-place or place of devotion. Thus each of the three names by which this place has been known, viz., Ross-Bulead, Kyle, and Clonfert, has reference both to sepulture and to religion. It is very probable that the stone chest already described was formerly deposited in the now so-called *grave* of St. Molua, and that the *grave* itself was, as I have already suggested, a Pagan fane.

In taking my farewell of St. Molua, it may prove acceptable that I should notice a sepulchral slab lately discovered within a few miles of Clonfert-Molua, and which was inscribed to the memory of a descendant of one of the followers of this saint. The discovery took place at Monaincha (near Roscrea), once a house of the Culdees, who are called mērc beathajδ, or sons of life, by the Four Masters. Monaincha itself was known by the appellation “*insula viventium*.” The slab is sand-stone, and measures forty-nine inches in length, twenty-two and a-half inches in breadth, and two inches in thickness. It is inscribed in Irish characters:—

E. A.
OR AR MHAENACH
UA MHAELLUZDACH.

The stone, unfortunately, was broken across; nevertheless, the inscription is sufficiently legible. The letters E.A. apparently represent words, of which they are the initials. They probably stand for eirē aēar. Thus, the inscription would literally be in English, “Hear, Father, a prayer for Maenach O’Mael-Lugdach.” This inscription is remarkable in having the monosyllable, ar, instead of the usual one, do (for), generally met with on tomb-stones. I find the same monosyllable in an inscription copied in the second volume of Mottes’ abridgment of the “*Philosophical Transactions*,” from 1700 to 1720. That inscription runs, “ar ar ʒilla ʒarar,” i. e. “a prayer for him devoted to Kieran.”¹ It probably was the sepulchral slab of O’Heyne, king of Siol Muireadhy and Connaught, who was interred at Clonmacnoise, A.D. 1100. It remains at Clonmacnoise yet.

We find several religious persons named Maenach. Thus, there was a Maenach, abbot of Aghaboe, who died in the year 914; Maenach, abbot of Clonard, who died in 954; Maenach, abbot of Duleek, who died in 895; Maenach of Bangor (county of Down), who died in 919; and Maenach of Kells, who died in 1001. There was also *Maenach, abbot of Clonfert-Molua*. See Colgan, *Acta S.S.* p. 58, where Maenach is Latinized Mænachus. As Mael-Lugdach

¹ The word ar is also to be found at Mael-Kieran, on that of Tuathal, and on Clonmacnoise on the stone of the abbot that of Findan.

(the term used on the Monaincha slab) means a person devoted to St. Molua, it is most likely that the individual to whose memory this stone was engraved, was of the family of Maenach, abbot of Clonfert-Molua. Archdall informs us that Maenach was interred at Clonfert-Molua. The characters on the Monaincha slab indicate its belonging to the ninth or tenth centuries, and, accordingly, that it is of an antiquity of nine hundred or a thousand years.

I will now pass to the BELL OF ST. CUMMIN of Kilcommon, in the King's County. This bell is made of iron, and, at the base, is in the form of a parallelogram, the ends of which are fastened with rivets, and also united by a soldering of brass. This relic is much corroded and damaged by oxydation. Nevertheless, it is far more perfect than the bell of St. Molua, just written of; and, notwithstanding the injury which time has inflicted on it, it at present measures ten inches in height, and seven inches by five at the base. This bell, as well as that of St. Molua, belongs to my little collection. It was presented to me in the year 1848, by Patrick Quinlisk, a farmer occupying part of the lands of Kilcommon, in the King's County, near to the ruins of the church, to the founder of which, this bell once belonged. The relic was given to Quinlisk, as a death-bed donation, in 1842, by Patrick Heenan, a relative of his, who was then quitting this world, after having seen upwards of ninety annual suns pass over him.

According to the better opinion, St. Cummin, to whom this bell belonged, was known as Cuimin-fada, or "the tall" Cuimin. There were several saints named Cuimin. The only competitors, however, for the reputation of having established the monastery at Kilcommon are Cuimin-fada and Cummineus albus, or "white" Cuimin. There is little, if any, doubt that the former was the founder of it.

Kilcommon formerly was known by the name of Disert-Cuimin (*Acta SS.* p. 409), and it is situate a few miles west of Roscrea. *Disert* is the Irish for a lonesome unpopulated place, and of that character Kilcommon appears to have been at the time St. Cuimin resided there, for he himself writes of it thus:—"hæc dixi, non ut vos impugnarem, sed ut me ut nycticoracem in domicilio latitantem defenderem" (*Colgan, Acta SS.* pp. 408, 411). A remarkable proof of the identity of Disert of old with the modern Kilcommon is the following:—Boate (*Natural History of Ireland*, Dublin edition, 1726, p. 71), treating of mines of iron, has the fourth section of his book occupied with that particular description of the mineral, which he designates "the second sort of iron-mine, called rock-mine," and he says, "of this kind hitherto there hath but two mines been discovered in Ireland, the one in Munster, near the town of Tallow, by the earl of Cork's iron-works; the other in Leinster, in King's-county, in a place called Desart land, belonging to one serjeant major *Piggot*, which rock is of so great a compass, that before this rebellion it furnished divers great iron-works, and could have furnished

many more, without any notable diminution; seeing the deepest pits that had been yet made in it, were not above two yards deep." About a year ago (I write in 1852), some persons, employed under the Board of Public Works in Ireland, in the drainage department, struck, not very far from Kilcommon church, and in the parish of that name, upon an extensive bed of rock-ore, consisting of iron, sulphur, and some arsenic. They found it within six or seven feet of the surface. It is scarcely necessary to observe that the mine thus recently opened is that described by Boate so long ago. Gerard Boate prefixes to the edition of his book, published in 1652, two hundred years ago, a letter from his brother Arnold, from which we learn that the nominal author had not been at all in Ireland up to that date, but that he had his information from his brother Arnold, who was himself instructed by others, amongst whom was Sir William Parsons, then of Birr castle, an ancestor of the present earl of Rosse, a nobleman so highly celebrated for his scientific attainments. When the "employés" of the Board of Works unwittingly struck upon the iron mine, mentioned by Boate, and saw its shining, yellow, metallic lustre, they concluded that it was pure gold; but their fond dreams were soon dispelled by a merciless chemist, who made known the true nature of the mineral.

Archdall (*Monasticon*) erroneously attributes the religious establishment at Kilcommon to Cuimin "the white." The better opinion, however, is that Cuimin-fada was its founder. He was educated at Durrow, and is reported to have delivered himself most learnedly in the famous synod of Leighlin, on the subject of the proper time for celebration of Easter. He subsequently wrote a very learned epistle on the same subject, and therein ably defended the Roman time for keeping the paschal festival. In that epistle he calls by the name Lugidus, St. Molua, whose bell has been written of in the preceding pages of this paper. It has been judiciously remarked that the epistle just mentioned, proves Cuimin to have possessed an extraordinary degree of learning in its various branches, and that it also demonstrates the Irish monastic libraries to have been well supplied with books at that early age.

This saint was son to Fiachna, king of West Munster. Cuimin-fada was born A.D. 592, and died the 2nd of November, A.D. 662, aged seventy years, according to the Four Masters. Ware (*Bishops*, at Clonfert) assigns his death to the 12th of November in the same year. A considerable difference of opinion exists amongst the learned as to whether he was a bishop, and, particularly, as to whether he was bishop of Clonfert. Both Colgan and Ware suppose him to have been a bishop, the latter, on the authority of the Four Masters, placing him in the see of Clonfert. On the other hand, the late Dr. Lanigan argues, from Ussher not having styled him bishop or *comarban*, that he never was one. This saint, at all events, was interred at Clonfert; and his memory must have been highly revered there, for we find that,

precisely five hundred years subsequent to his decease, his relics were exhumed and placed in a shrine by the clergy of Clonfert-Brendan. The following passage from the Four Masters (*ad ann.* 1162) is a proof of this:—"Ṭaṛṛi eṛcoṛp Ṭḡaoṛnenn ṛ Cummaṛne Foda do ṭabaṛṛt a ṭaliḡaṛṇ lā raṇḡaḡ Bṛēnaṛṇn, ṛ nō cuṛnead rēṛṇ cunḡaṛṇḡe ṛompa,"—i. e. "the relics of bishop Maeinenn and of Cummaíne Foda were removed from the earth by the clergy of Brenainn [Clonfert], and they were enclosed in a protecting shrine." I cannot think that, because the Four Masters have, in the passage just quoted, given to Maeinenn the style of bishop and withheld it from Cuimin, we should conclude that St. Cuimin was not of that order. The title of bishop was necessarily used to distinguish Maeinenn from others of the same name; but Cuimin was sufficiently particularized by his being called "Foda," as none of the Cuimins, except himself, were known by that epithet. It must also be remembered that, in the early ages of Christianity in Ireland, very many of the parochial clergy were of the order of bishops.

The present dilapidated state of the ruins of Kilcommon church does not offer anything worth dwelling on here.

The next remain, to which I shall call attention, is the BELL OF ST. CAMIN, of Kilcamin, King's County. The only fragment of this antique now remaining is that sent herewith. It is part of the top and handle, with a small portion of one side and of one end. It measures about six inches in length by three inches in breadth. This bell has probably been, since the days of St. Camin until about a year ago, exposed to the worst of usage. It, undoubtedly, has been badly treated of late years. Up to a comparatively short time ago it was left open to the vicissitudes of the weather, in the fork of a white-thorn bush, within the precincts of the burial-ground at Kilcamin, near the town of Cloghan, King's County. We cannot be surprised that we find so small a remnant of this bell now forthcoming, when we reflect that it was, for a long series of years, acted on by the cold and rains and frosts of the winter, and by the scorching heats of summer. Notwithstanding the bad treatment it has experienced, enough, however, of the relic survives, to show that the bell of St. Camin was made of iron, and in the parallelogram shape.

If the patron saint of Kilcamin be the same with him who founded a monastery at Iniscealtra, or, as it is now called, Holy Island, situate in that part of Loughdearg known as the bay of Scariffe, he died the 24th or 25th of March, A.D. 653. Camin was son of Dima and half-brother of Guaire, king of Connaught, universally renowned for his hospitality. In connexion with the name of king Guaire, I send for inspection a bottle, which was presented to me some years ago by James Mahon, Esq., of Northampton, in the county of Galway. It was found in a cellar of the long dilapidated castle of king Guaire, at Kinvarra, in that county. This cellar has been for ages submerged beneath the waters of Galway bay. Could we but believe that this

bottle might have served at the hospitable board of the prince of Hy Fiachra-Aidne, eleven hundred years ago, what a moral lesson would it teach us, when we see the fragile glass vessel still perfect and uninjured, whilst its owner, the generous and powerful Guaire, has many centuries ago crumbled into dust!

The name of St. Camin's mother was Cumania. St. Camin wrote a Commentary on the Psalms, which was accompanied by the Hebrew text. The manuscript in his handwriting was in existence in the days of Colgan and Ware.

The next object I request attention to is a small bronze BELL from SCATTERY ISLAND, near the mouth of the Shannon. I obtained what remains of this bell from Mr. Underwood, who informed me that it was found at Scattery. This island was called Iniscathy, and also Cathaigh-inis, names probably derived from יוֹיֵךְ , an island, and עָבַד , worship, which in the genitive case is עָבַדֵי . Inis-cathaigh, or Cathaigh-inis, may thus mean "island of worship," or "worship island." It was also called Inis-cathiana. This last appellation appears to mean "island of worship of Ana." Ana was the Pagan Irish "Mater deorum," or the Earth, of whose worship we find traces connected with the names of numerous places in Ireland, which have been subsequently rendered conspicuous by religious foundations under the Christian dispensation.

This Scattery bell is composed of bronze, having a crimson-coloured fracture, as if some antimony had entered into its composition. This specimen is, by far, the smallest I have met with of rectangular-shaped bells, its dimensions at the mouth not being more than two inches by an inch and a-half. It measures two inches three quarters in height, exclusive of the handle, which is of one casting with the body of the bell. Traces are yet visible of a staple having depended from the interior of its top, as if for suspension of a clapper. This staple, or rather remains of one, is evidence that tongues were sometimes used in small square bells, although I am inclined to look upon the clapper at present attached to the rectangular bell of St. Ruadhan of Lorrha (now also sent for inspection) as not at all so ancient as that bell itself.

St. Senan was founder of the Christian religious establishment at Inis-cathaigh, in the territory of Corcabaigín, and present county of Clare. This island is situate in the river Shannon, within a short distance of, and opposite to, the town of Kilrush. There are many vestiges of days gone by yet existing here—or there were such in October, 1839, when I visited the island. To particularize them is beyond the scope of this paper. I may, nevertheless, observe that Archdall and various other writers assert that the fine round tower here is 120 feet in height. But this is not the fact. I measured its elevation with a Hadley's sextant in 1839, and it does not exceed eighty-seven feet. The door-way, by which this tower is entered, is *on a level with the ground*. It has a semicircular arch, while the four

apertures at the top of the tower are flat-headed. The tower is built upon a rock, whose surface, at the time when I visited the place, was perfectly free from debris, or other accidental accumulation. The fact of the easily accessible position of the door of this round tower, as well as the existence elsewhere of doors similarly circumstanced, such as the door of the tower on Ram Island, and of some others, is an argument bearing against the theory that such structures were erected as places of security. An idea seems to have been adopted (without sufficient inquiry) that the entrance door of every one of the Irish round towers was elevated considerably above the level of the ground.

St. Senan is said by some to have established his monastery at Iniscathy before the arrival of St. Patrick on his mission for the conversion of the Irish. He was a native of Corcabaisgin, and was born at Magh-lacha, in that district, about A.D. 488. His death took place the 1st of March, A.D. 544, and he was interred at Iniscathy. The name of this saint's father was Ergind or Ercan, and that of his mother was Coemgella. Both father and mother were of noble extraction.

O'Halloran (*Hist. of Ireland*, vol. iii. p. 188) says that the bell of St. Senan, or some other bell taken to be it, was still (when he wrote) religiously preserved in the west of the county of Clare; and that to swear by it falsely was then agreed by the common people to be followed immediately by convulsions and death. Could the little broken bell now being written of be the remains of that once revered and dreaded relic of the patron saint of Scattery Island? Who can now determine? It, however, is more likely that the bell written of by O'Halloran is that yet preserved in a family of the county of Clare, and which is known by the name Clogoir, i.e. cloḡ, bell, and oḡḡda, precious.

I also send for inspection three other bells of saints, namely, the BARNAN COULAWN, the BELL OF KILLSHANNY, in the west of the county of Clare, and that of ST. RUADHAN of Lorrha, in the barony of Lower Ormond, and county of Tipperary. I lent these three bells to the Royal Irish Academy a few years ago, when my esteemed and respected friend, Dr. Petrie, read a communication of his own on the subject of them. The Academy went, at that time, to very considerable expense for drawings and engravings of these three bells. I am not aware whether the observations of Dr. Petrie regarding these bells are yet in print. I feel, however, that I may be well excused from expatiating on such a topic as they furnish, when it has been already handled by one so capable of doing justice to it as Dr. Petrie is. I shall, therefore, confine myself here to noting the eras of these saints, and offering a few observations I deem to be requisite in justification of myself for suggestions made over thirty years ago.¹ On the occasion to which I allude I was wholly astray as

¹ See *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. xiv. (1825), *Antiquities*, pp. 31-43.

to the nature of the Barnan Coulawn. I had not previously seen any other ancient bell. It is now quite clear to me that the iron portion of this relic was the veritable bell of St. Culanus. It will be easy to induce the observer, who looks at the little semicircular aperture in the base of the bronze curbing environing this bell, to agree with me in thinking that the appellation, Barnan Coulawn, means, simply, "little gap of Culanus." Dr. Petrie, if I mistake not, thinks it means "the gapped bell of Culanus." Notwithstanding my great respect for the opinion of this excellent antiquary, I much regret that I cannot at all agree with him on this point. *Barnan* is the Irish for a *little gap*, and this little gap, evidently, was that left in the protecting curbing for the person swearing upon the bell to introduce his thumb or finger by. It was from this gap, rather than from any fortuitous injury to the original bell, that the term "Barnan" was used in reference to it. No matter how gapped or injured the ancient bells of Irish saints may have been, I believe that the term "Barnan" was not applied to them except when they were ornamented and preserved as relics to be sworn on. The bell of St. Evin, who was brother to St. Culanus, was called Barnan Evin. It was deposited in the care of the MacEgans, hereditary justices of Munster, for them to administer oaths on. Colgan, writing of St. Evin, says of his bell:—"Fertur et ibi post ejus mortem extitisse cymbalum, sive nola hujus Sancti *Bernan-Emhin* appellata, et in tanta veneratione habita, ut per eam tanquam inviolabilis sacramenti genus, posterius præsertim ex semine Eugenii patris ejus oriundi, consueverint jurare, et motas controversias juramenti Sacramento concludere." The Barnan Coulawn and Barnan Evin are the only two bells to which I can at this moment recollect that the term "Barnan" has been applied.

St. Culanus died about the beginning of the tenth century, as I suppose, for his brother Cormac, the celebrated scholar, king, and bishop of Cashel, was killed in the year 908. The bell of Culanus was given to me more than forty years ago by the Rev. Michael Bohun, then parish priest of Glenkeen, county of Tipperary. He died on Christmas day, A.D. 1815.

St. Cuana of Kill-chuana, *alias* Killshanny, in the west of the county of Clare, is supposed to have died about A.D. 650. The bell of this saint was given to me by the late Rev. Mr. Nowlan, then parish priest of New Quay, county of Clare.

St. Ruadhan of Lorrha, or Lothra, was of noble extraction. Dr. Lanigan assigns his death to A.D. 584, and his festival to the 15th of April. The bell of St. Ruadhan was presented to me, some years ago, by the Rev. Mr. O'Brien, Roman Catholic incumbent of Lorrha, in which parish this relic was preserved.

In addition to the seven Christian bells already dwelt on, I send also for inspection a few specimens of Pagan crotals. On this subject I content myself by referring to two papers in the fourth volume of the "Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy." At p. 239

will be found the observations of the reverend, learned, and respected president of that society; and at pp. 428, 430–433, are some humble opinions of mine on the same subject.

In order that this “bell” subject should be complete in every variety for the members of the Kilkenny Archæological Society, I further send for inspection some sheep bells of the sixteenth century, and also some other bells. One of these latter is a curious little bell, presented to me by a late lamented and excellent friend, the Rev. Paul Holmes, then rector of Gallen, in the King’s County. It was found on his land at Corbeg, in the same county. A modern sheep bell accompanies the others. A comparison of it with one of the ancient crotals, is decisive in favour of the art of bell-casting in our own day.

ON THE CROSS-LEGGED EFFIGIES OF THE COUNTY OF KILKENNY.

BY THE REV. JAMES GRAVES.

NOTHING is, perhaps, so interesting to the student of antiquity as the investigation of customs connected with the dead, and the universal desire evinced by all races, at every period of the history of man, to keep the departed in honourable remembrance after they had passed away from the busy scenes of life. In this universal custom there is shown an instinctive feeling of the great truth of a future existence for the body, even amongst the most debased tribes of mankind. The rough pillar-stone, the rude mound of earth, the piled up cairn, the ponderous pyramid, the rugged cromlech, and the richly-sculptured Christian monument, though widely different in age and execution, all have the same end in view, the commemoration of the dead. If we take any of the classes of sepulchral monuments here enumerated, we shall find that, although the purpose may be the same, certain peculiarities distinguish the class into subordinate sections; for example, amongst the Christian monuments of Ireland, how diverse will be found their distinguishing features; the monumental cross, the cross-inscribed slab, the effigial tomb, all have their varieties, and would amply repay investigation. It is, however, but to one variety of the latter subdivision, as confined to one locality, that I mean at present to call attention. I allude to the cross-legged effigies existing in the county of Kilkenny. Most persons are familiar with the numerous examples of this class of monument in England, and those who have visited the Temple Church in London, cannot fail to remember the mail-clad knightly figures of this kind, which form one of the greatest attractions of that beautiful building. Per-